

Continuing our inhuman coverage of all things unbeautiful, we at The Monster Times hired a top private detective who bravely located those emcees of E.C. comix; The Vault-Keeper ('The Vault of Horror'), The Crypt-Keeper ('Tales From the Crypt'), and The Old Witch ('The Haunt of Fear'). Checking further, we found someone willing to interview them (Our defective is now in the Serenity Sanitarium for No-Good Nuts). Yes, we found Mark Evanier, and flew him from Los Angeles to Brooklyn (on a broomstick... of course), to introduce our readers to... The Gruesome Threesome.

"This is the perfect assignment for you," they were telling me. "You don't know the meaning of the word, fear. You don't know the meaning of the word, quit. We've read over a lot of your articles, Evanier. You don't know the meaning of very many words, do you?"

"'Fear,'" I said, "(noun) Painful emotion excited by apprehension of impending danger; dread; the object of fear; filial regard mingled with awe; reverence. (verb transitive) to feel fear; to apprehend..."

"Can the cute stuff," they said, "we need an interview for this issue of The Monster Times, so we want you to go talk to the three ghouls who used to host the E.C. horror comic books. Here's the address. Be there in ten minutes."

"Quit," I said, "(adjective) Discharged; released; free; clear. (verb transitive) quitting, quitted..."

JOURNEY INTO BROOKLYN!

Ten minutes later, however, I was knocking upon a certain door in the heart of Flatbush—Why, I don't know. Something about my body being maimed if I didn't come back with the interview. The door swung open, slowly and with a noticeable Inner Sanctum squeal. The interior of the house was dark, very much so. But I was able to make out the hunched-over form of the Vault-Keeper, with no problem.

Not since 1954 had the Vault-Keeper been seen in public, nor his partners, the Crypt-Keeper and the Old Witch. It was then that their popular horror comics—The Vault of Horror, Tales From the Crypt, and The Haunt of Fear, respectively—were discontinued. Save for a few reprints, they had all been retired ever since. And it was remarkable how well-remembered they were, in some circles.

... RAPPING AT MY CHAMBER DOOR!

"Who is it?" yelled a voice from somewhere within the old house. "Is it another Avon lady, V.R.?"

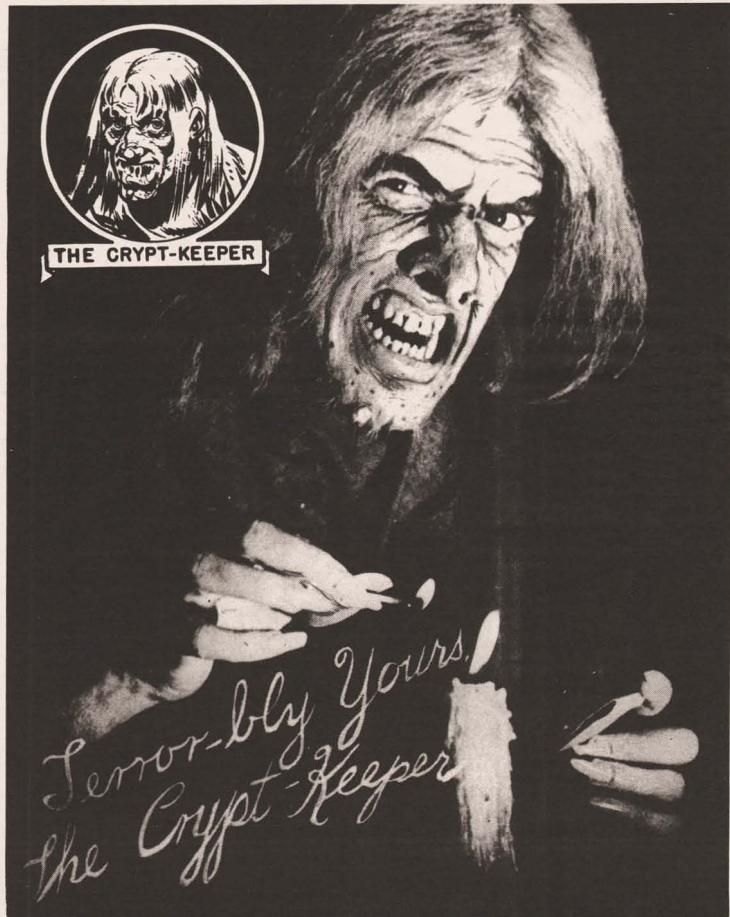
The craggy features of the Vault-Keeper were beginning to come into focus. He looked at he always had. Sickening. "Heh heh," he chuckled. "No, it's just some tall, skinny glop. Come on it, putrid puss! What brings you here?"

I introduced myself as a reporter from The Monster Times.

"Oh," He sounded disappointed. "I was thinking it might be someone important. Well, here I am in the livid flesh, the Vault-Keeper.

Introducin' the Gruesome Threesome

INTERVIEW BY MARK EVANIER



Care to hear one of my nauseating novelettes? Got a dandy here about a husband who sticks his wife in a microwave oven. It's called 'Spouse-Warming'!"

"Uh, not right now, if you don't mind," I said. "Who was that I heard yelling to you, just a minute ago?"

GALLERY OF GORE!

"Oh, that's the Old Witch! Come on, stoosh over this way and I'll introduce you to her."

As he led me through the corridors, I studied this majestic home where they had ensconced themselves for retirement. It was all

very old and very ornate. As we walked down the hall, I noticed a series of portraits of Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Vincent Price, Peter Lorre, Lon Chaney and Jerry Lewis. "What's Jerry Lewis doing up there with all these masters of screen horror?" I asked.

The Vault-Keeper stopped in his



"Hee, hee! If it isn't me! Yours truly, the Old Witch, and I've got my trusty broom with which I'll sweep a little gloom & doom your way. Yesir, my evil brew's been steamin' an' bubblin' just to make it hot for you. Won't you join me in a cup? It's the kind E.C. fans like—puts hair on your chest, warts on your nose, and flowers on your grave!"

tracks and looked up at me. "Obviously, you've never seen a Jerry Lewis movie."

I was led into a high-ceiling room, well-cluttered with cob-webs. The walls were lined with ancient books and potions. In the center, a bubbling cauldron stood. "Is this the Old Witch's laboratory?" I asked.

"It ain't Dinah's Place," the Vault-Keeper responded.

While the Vault-Keeper had aged little in almost twenty years, the Old Witch was altogether different. She shuffled in, holding a lizard by the tail, and seeming oblivious to my presence. "I'm so glad it wasn't another Avon Lady, V.K. We haven't finished the last one, yet! Hee hee!" Suddenly, I was spattered. "Well, it's about time we got some young blood around here. Fond felicitations, freak! Welcome to my Hacienda of Horror. Step up and glorify a scrumptious slew of slop from my crud-crusted cauldron!"

I was at a loss for words to refuse. This, Emily Post never covered. I wouldn't even know which fork to use to eat a slew of slop. I tried to change the subject. "Say, is the Crypt-Keeper around? I always got a kick out of his stories. Is he here?"

A SLEW OF SLOP!

The Old Witch motioned to a chair. "He'll be back in a few minutes. Park your crumpling carcass, slob. So, you're from The Monster Times, huh?"

"That's right," I said. "I understand you're subscribers."

The Vault-Keeper cut in. "Heh heh, yep! It's a little far out for us, though. Especially that rancid reviewer of yours, Rex Reed."

"That's Women's Wear Daily, you're thinking of, V.K." said the real Old Witch. "You're a real Ghoulnutin'."

"Just what do you two do all day now that you're retired? Ever have the urge to get back in harness?"

Richardson, whoever he is!"

"He's the actor who played you in the 'Tales From the Crypt' movie," I explained.

"Who's the skinny kid without acne?" he asked the others.

THE MONSTER TIMES, EH?

"Heh heh, he's from that nauseating newspaper, The Monster Times responded the Vault-Keeper.

The Crypt-Keeper's face, I noted, had not changed much. The added years only gave it more of its ghoulish flavor. Now, as I was introduced, it began to have that faintly sinister smirk. He peered at me, then brightened up considerably. "A repulsive reporter, huh? Heh heh, so you came to learn at the feet of the old master of cemeteries, the Crypt-Keeper. Well, you'll be amply-sickened by the time I get through with you. You seem a little young to have been a fearsome follower of my muck-mag..."

"Well," I said, "They were a bit before my time. But there's been a renewed interest these days, in the old E.C. comics. Reprints... movies... They're even holding a big convention..."

"And you know why?" The Crypt-Keeper almost bolted from his chair. "It's because these guys, today, don't know horror! They think it's all biting necks and trick endings and the guy you least suspect turning out to be the werewolf! Putrescence is in the hands of amateurs! Why, in my yecchy yelp yams... Here, let me give you a demoniac demonstration!"

Before I could protest, the Crypt-Keeper shoved me over to a guillotine and locked my head under its hanging blade. "Now, that's horror! Are you scared, huh?"

I had to admit that I was.

"Your shoulders are shivering. Your trunk is trembling. Now, for a quivering quip... The Monster Times lost a good reporter when they tried to cut down on the overhead! You get it?"

CURSED RENTED GUILLOTINE!

"I get it! I get it! Now, let me out of here!"

"Heh heh! Not yet! We've got too good a story going!" "But that blade could fall, any minute!"

"Say, grimy! You've got a pretty good neck on your shoulders. Here we go. I'm pressing the release!"

Nothing happened. When I opened my eyes, I could still open my eyes. The Crypt-Keeper was pounding the side of the guillotine.

"That's the last order I place with Abbey Rents! Horror is a grave undertaking! Can't do it with cheap equipment."

The Vault-Keeper unbuckled me and led me towards the door. "Come back next week when he gets it working right. You'll just love his cadaverous cavingtons! By bye and buy Vault of Horror!"

One outside, I ran for my life-sweating, shaking... unable to even think straight.

And that, general, is the whole truth and why I think I qualify for a Medical Exemption from the Draft.

*Horror-bly Yours,
The Vault-Keeper*



THE VAULT-KEEPER

"Well, my blood-curdled kiddies, if you aren't a sight for gouged eyes! Your friend the Crypt-Keeper is here to, heh-heh, 'socket' to you... and I hope you remember to keep an eye out for him. Go ahead, take a long look around the crypt... I know you would have wanted it that way..."



Jack Davis' rendering of the immortal Crypt-Keeper

From out of the pulsating pages of the late, great EC horror comics comes a horrific movie . . . also out of MT No. 4 a sorta almost reprint of an ECish article called . . .

"TALES FROM THE CRYPT"

Yep, gang! You remember all those great EC comics of the early 1950's (How could you possibly forget with all these great illus on every page.) that have been reprinted as paperbacks and even now in hard-cover book form (**HORROR COMICS OF THE 1950's!**). Well, now five of those great old tales of murder and mutilation and corpses rising from the grave and -demon-haunted catacombs and obstacle courses of walls covered with sharp, new, glistening razor blades, and-all-like-that-there! . . . have been turned into a feature-length film, starring some biggies in both the horror and the "respectable" acting fields.



Sir Ralph Richardson as the Crypt-Keeper.

Sir Ralph Richardson, of all the "respectable" people you'd least expect to see, plays the Crypt-Keeper. Not so much the pungently-punning black-humorist Crypt-keeper who obnoxiously enhanced the pages of the EC comix, but a somber, moody, satanic figure in a monk's robe, broodingly holding inquisition of souls as he sits before a huge

TALES FROM THE CRYPT



Peter Cushing as a risen corpse, seeking POETIC JUSTICE . . .

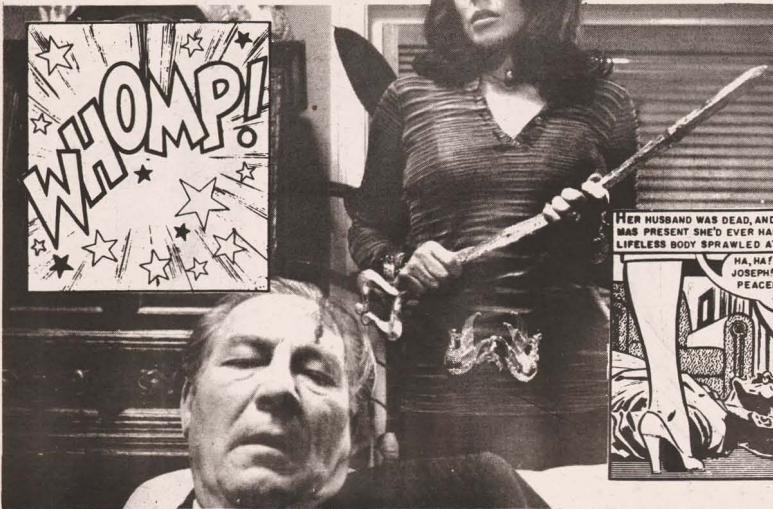


COMPARISON TIME: I think we'll all agree, class, that Mr. Cushing's modern makeup and performance nicely emulates EC artist Graham Ingels' Ingels' eerie original 1952 version of the same tale: POETIC JUSTICE.

skull-shaped altar. But Sir Ralph isn't really so "respectable" — the first film he appeared in was a 1932 shocker, **THE GHOUL**.

The Crypt-keeper introduces the tales, by questioning each of the main participants in the stories. Then we flash-back to each character's particular doings (mainly evil), and we see how "the evil that men do" not only "lives

after them" but often even chases after them from the other side of the grave (or Crypt). And among the horrified living and vengeful undead hunters are "respectable" newcomers to horror *Jeanne Collins* (Mrs. Anthony Newley), *Patrick Magee* (currently making waves in **CLOCKWORK ORANGE** and **KING LEAR**), who puts in a remarkable performance as a blind



"Merry Christmas, Luv" deadpanned Joan Collins to hubby Martin Boddy's dead pan.

EC writer-artist Johnny Craig's "violent" 1954 comix version of his AND ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE . . . was far tamer than in the 1972 film. No blood 'n' split brains were shown in the "evil" comic books. Just a healthy old WHOMP!

man (one wonders if Mr. Magee could do a bad acting job if he TRIED) and Richard Greene, who used to only buckle swashes in TV's ROBIN HOOD.

But even great old horror veteran Peter Cushing does a turn-around in roles. Instead of either the classic monster, leering mad doctor, or the stuffy vampire-stalking police inspector, he plays instead a sympathetic, aging and kind-hearted garbage collector who repairs thrown-away toys and gives them to young children. Bet you weren't ready for that! But rest assured, before his segment is over, he takes on a more horrifying demeanor, as his photo reveals.

TALES FROM THE CRYPT had a "World Screamiere" on March 7th in New York City. The producers heartily advised all potential audiences to put themselves into a fine mood for the occasion by "Shrieking their way into the theater," and that "A scream will get them passes into the house." (ABC T.V. covered the corn-ball event, but the MT staff missed it all that night . . . seems there was a good horror flick on channel 2 that nite).

But more news for old EC comix fans, the stories from TALES FROM THE CRYPT, which have already seen comic, and paperback-reprint form, have come to book form; a novelization treatment of the stories! So comix have evolved to prose. It's been shown in various studies (studies which weren't publicized until long after Senator Estes Kefauver and Frederick Wertham, and the hypocritical Comics Code Authority had successfully ram-rodded the EC horror and science fiction comics out of business) that the ghouls and

GUNNER LAUGHED TO HIMSELF AS HE STARTED OUT OF HIS CUBICLE...



A SOUND BEHIND GUNNER FROZE HIS BLOOD! A SNARL AND A SQUEAK OF A DOOR OPENING...

BRUTUS! HUNGER-CRAZED BRUTUS! THEY'VE FREED HIM TOO!



GUNNER BEGAN TO RUN. HE HAD TO REACH FREEDOM BEFORE THAT STARVED DOG CAUGHT HIM! HE RAN DOWN THE TWISTING MAIN CORRIDORS... THE SOUND OF THE LOPING SHARLING DOG BEHIND HIM...



HER HUSBAND WAS DEAD, AND IT WAS THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT SHE'D EVER HAD! SHE STOOD OVER THE LIFELESS BODY SPRAWLED AT HER FEET AND SMILED...

HA, HA! MERRY CHRISTMAS, JOSEPH! YOU'RE SLEEPING SO PEACEFULLY! DREAMING OF SANTA CLAUS?



MORE COMPARISON TIME: Nigel Patrick's resemblance to the superintendent of the home for the blind in the BLIND ALLEY segment, and George Evans' original 1954 interpretation, drawn nearly two decaying decades ago.

murderers and undead and bug-eyed-monsters in the EC stories actually encouraged kids back in the 1950's to develop their reading skills, and to discover the many fantastic universes of wonder and horror to be found in prose stories. It's really ironic that the very comix which certain government officials and rival publishing companies conspired against to put out of business, should have this double tribute, yea, honor! of both film and prose adaptation. Those who learned to appreciate prose, reading EC comix, can come full circle, reading EC prose.

The EC comix frequently stories of the dead having their final justice, a horrifying vengeance, often a return from the crypt or tomb or burial plot to have the last Ghastly laugh. And Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein (who now put out MAD) can revel in the final gloating glory . . . giggling all the way to the bank. For it seems that TALES FROM THE CRYPT will be a horrific hit.

Let's face it; no one's ever going to make a successful movie about the Comics Code Authority — let alone about the late Senator Estes Kefauver (who him)?



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TALES

FROM THE

CRYPT



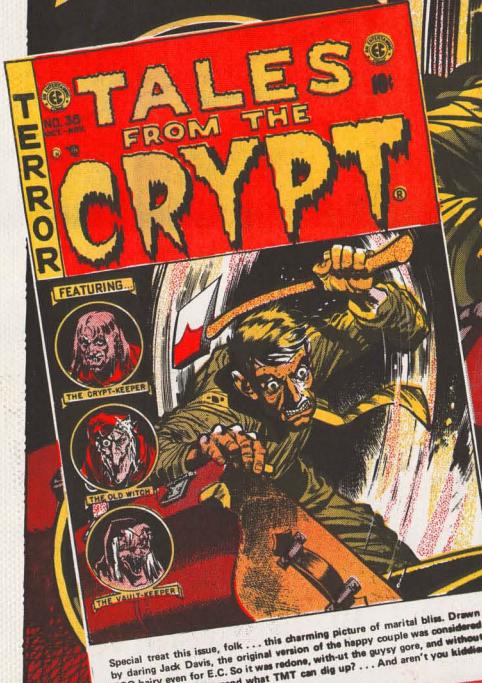
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FEATURING...



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



Special treat this issue, folk... this charming picture of marital bliss. Drawn by daring Jack Davis, the original version of the happy couple was considered TOO hairy even for E.C. So it was redone, with-ut the guyz gora, and without Davis' name! Isn't it grand what TMT can dig up?... And aren't you kiddies glad you axed for an All E.C. issue?

THE VAULT-KEEPER

